

# A Thirsty Land



Algiers Mission Band

# ALGIERS MISSION BAND

FOUNDED IN 1888 BY MISS I. LILIAS TROTTER.

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HEADQUARTERS : DAR NAAMA, EL BIAR, ALGIERS.

*General Secretary* : MR. H. W. BUCKENHAM.

*Treasurer* : REV. R. J. WAINE.

*Corresponding Secretary and Hostess* : MISS V. WOOD.

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*Great Britain* : *Chairman of Home Council* : MR. H. F. BERRY.

*Secretary-Treasurer* : MR. PETER G. LONGLEY, B.D.

A.M.B. Office : 76, Marylebone High Street, London, W.1.

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*Honorary Corresponding Secretary in U.S.A.* : MRS. MYRTLE B. HARE,  
609 California Blvd, Toledo 12, Ohio, U.S.A.

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## OVERSEAS REFEREES :

DR. PHILIP E. HOWARD, JR., The Sunday School Times, Heid Buildings,  
325, North Thirteenth Street, Philadelphia 5, Pa., U.S.A.

M. LE PASTEUR CHATONEY, 31, Rue Clauzel, Algiers.

M. LE PASTEUR ROLLAND, Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria.

MR. LEUTENEGGER, Hennaya, Tlemcen (Oran), Algeria.

Mlle. L. SAILLENS, L'Institut Biblique, 39 Grand-Rue, Nogent-sur-Marne,  
Seine, France.

DR. R. PACHE, L'Institut Emmaus, Vennes-sur-Lausanne, Switzerland.

MR. H. E. ALEXANDER, Le Roc, Cologny, Switzerland (Ecole Biblique de Genève).

MISS RONA SMEETON, 811 New North Road, Mt. Albert, S.W.2, Auckland  
New Zealand.

## STATIONS AND WORKERS.

### DAR NAAMA

1920 Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Buckenham

1920 Miss V. Wood

1948 Mlle. Y. Félix

1949 Rev. and Mrs. R. J. Waine

### BLIDA

1929 Miss P. M. Russell

1948 Mlle. J. Guibé

### MILIANA

1907 Miss M. D. Grautoff

1954 Mr. and Mrs. J. Dowling

### RELIZANE

1947 Miss E. Clark (in Britain)

1951 Miss A. E. Powell (in Britain)

### TOLGA

1937 Mme. Lull

### TLEMCEEN

1946, 1948 Mr. and Mrs. A. Porteous

1949 Miss I. W. Fletcher (in Britain)

### TOUGGOURT

1930 Miss I. K. Nash (in Britain)

### AIN-ARNAT

1919 Mlle. A. Buttica

1946 Mlle. G. Chollet



No. 110.

JUNE, 1955.

## EDITORIAL

Many of our readers will be sorry to hear that Mrs. Buckenham's proposed visit to America this spring had to be cancelled on account of Mr. Buckenham's illness. On Easter Monday, after a time spent in Scotland, when she was busy with arrangements for the journey to the States, Mrs. Buckenham came back to Dar Naama to look after Mr. Buckenham. At the time of writing he is still not well; but by the time you read this we hope he may have made a good recovery, and perhaps be planning a furlough in Great Britain.

The short tour of itineration to Ghardaia undertaken by Miss Grautoff, Miss Russell and Mr. Waine before Easter, was the most outstanding event of this last quarter. Though brief, we who followed it with our prayers fully believed it might be worth while, with the blessing of God upon it. The accounts given us by the travellers on their return showed us too that, while to say what was accomplished was impossible—we could yet be sure that by the persevering visiting and distributing of Scripture and tracts wherever possible, no time was wasted, and the number of persons who were spoken to or read with, or who received some portion of the Word, must have been great. So we leave the result to God, Who, knowing the end from the beginning, may well be rejoicing over some blessed ef-

fect produced in the hearts of some of those Mozabite people who had contact with the missionaries. From what you read on another page about this trip, you may get some inkling of the hardness of these people, and their stubborn resistance to any Christian influence, which makes it seem impossible to get near them. It must seem as if all the time the LORD was saying "*I would*—how often *would* I gather you" but "*You would not*"—yet He "*shall never be discouraged*," and these stone-like hearts may yet give Him praise.

V. Wood.

## THIRSTY SOULS

"Far and wide, though all unknowing, pants for Thee each mortal breast; Human tears for Thee are flowing, Human hearts in Thee would rest; Thirsting, as for dews of even, As the new-born grass for rain, Thee they seek as God of Heaven, Thee as Man for sinners slain."

This last couplet in its entirety may not be consciously true of Muslim souls, to whom the full message of JESUS has never been told, but to many to whom it has been told it *is true*.

In a walk with my wife to a house she had an urge to visit, I realised this more intensely than ever before. On

many previous walks, as we contacted men by the wayside, children playing, who stopped their play to hear the story of Jesus in song, women in their shut-in homes eager to listen, the reality of this soul-thirst had been mightily deepened within me and the Holy Spirit's passion of love consuming all else that might be in the messenger's heart.

And now—here was a man, allowing himself in an excess that even Muslim law would condemn, yet respectful and willing to hear a word: there a young man of the student type, employing his spare moments in reading what the world's press provides, yet gladly accepting a proffered tract: and even the shopkeepers seeming eager to have something to look into. "A word in season, how good it is." And Paul's word to Timothy was, "Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season."

It is no fault in the rising generation that some of them were born to receive only the instruction of Muslim faith and practice. But because it is true that "none but JESUS can do helpless sinners good," it is when the HOLY SPIRIT applies the spoken word to the hearer's conscience that the soul-thirst can begin to be assuaged. H.W.B.

### GIVING THE "MILK OF THE WORD"

From different mission stations we hear of those to whom this "milk" has been offered to quench their thirst:—

Some Arab school girls who "love reading good books." One of these has a French New Testament, in which she reads with a cousin who looks out the verses in Arabic also.

Two girls begged for Gospels to take home, and something for their fathers to read. One of them came back saying she had read the Gospel of John to her father; and after listening attentively he said to her: "You should love your mistress very much, because she teaches you such good things." There

are others who come to the same classes who "drink in" the Word with deep attention. And some of the fathers of the girls begin to show interest in the Gospel.

Elsewhere also there are girls coming weekly to a class, where they bring their own pencils and copy books, eager to copy and learn by heart the texts written up on the blackboard. Their "keenness and good behaviour are a constant joy" to their teachers.

In yet another region the Scripture Union portions are the daily reading of a girl who says she has given her heart to the Lord.

### THIRST QUENCHED

A dear Christian woman whose missionary friends were leaving for a time "was very sad at our leaving." However, she heeded the exhortation "not to cry" at our leaving for this brief spell, but to trust wholly in Jesus. The next day she gave herself to God's Word, and God gave her a sure promise. She then gave herself to prayer, and God gave her faith. Next day she rose from her bed of sickness that has claimed her for nine months, and started painting! — tables, shelves, picture frames, etc.—to the amazement of all. Women who have come to mourn with the "dying" A. have been bewildered to have A. prepare for them and serve to them—their tea. The transformation is truly remarkable and brings glory and praise to the Name of Jesus. A., as one who has truly heard "the voice of Jesus" and come to Him, could testify, "My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him."

### STILL UNSATISFIED

The hymn, quoted above, words the Saviour's invitation to the thirsty thus: "*Stoop down, and drink, and live.*" There are many who have heard the offer to the thirsty ones who remain unsatisfied still. Is it not often because, though their heart tells them they should believe in Christ as the true

Saviour, they cannot bring themselves to *stoop down* to acknowledge in utter humility, their sinfulness, their abject weakness, and inability to walk aright in their own strength? One there is, of whom we have heard formerly how near he seemed to come; now all that can be said about him is that "he seems very far off the road just now." Others there are, who have gone so far as to come forward for baptism, perhaps sincerely meaning to follow Christ as faithful soldiers and servants all their lives; they even seemed to walk well for

a time, but now—through the fear of man, through the temptations to drink, through the love of the things of this world, or the tug of the old religion drawing them back—they are "far off the Road," yet perhaps still feeling from time to time conscious of an unquenched thirst. May it be so, and may the day come when the promise can be fulfilled, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty," water of life that "whosoever will" may take, and taking (however dire his state) may live to thirst no more.

## SEVEN DAYS IN THE SAHARA

It was on March 15, 1955, that, with hearts full of joy, we started in the little Austin car for the run of 600 or more kilometres to Ghardaia. The market town of Ghardaia is the centre of the seven towns in the region known as the M'zab. Miss Russell and I had visited it last just four years ago; but for Mr. Waine—our companion and driver—it was the first missionary trip to that district.

What a thrill it was to be gliding once more over the desert wastes on the way to revisit the friends we had made there long ago. This year, for the first time, we found wonderfully well-made roads all the way. How we delighted in the glorious light and shade on rocks and sand, the wide spaces, the pure exhilarating air. Now and then we encountered flights of sand coloured desert birds, or clouds of locusts rose from the road, dashing themselves against the windows of the car; or, occasionally, we overtook a caravan of camels, wending their way slowly to some distant town. But the less picturesque lorries now replace the camels as transporters of goods in the Sahara, and tourists arrive more often by air than by land.

Formerly, these seven towns were entirely under military control; now the Civil Administration has partly taken over, and the European quarter is greatly changed by the appearance of new

hotels, and villas, the construction of waterworks, and the instalment of electricity. Yet, on the whole, the Mozabite towns remain as they must have been for hundreds of years—women shut in in their windowless houses, while the husbands go north on commercial pursuits: narrow silent streets, for no Arabs, Europeans or Jews are couraged to wander there; and the tourists are only taken by some guide to see the view from a watch-tower on the wall, or from the roof of the Mosque with its chimney-shaped tower—but are never allowed to enter a M'zab mosque. Even so, the presence of men on the roof or the tower causes a cry to go forth to warn the women on their own roofs to go down into the house and hide below, lest they be seen by a man. On the whole, they seem so used to the seclusion that they are willing to live out their lives behind locked doors. Even the little children hurried away if they saw us coming.

While Mr. Waine was making contacts among the men in the "Debdaba" or European quarter, we were seeking out former friends in the Jewish quarter. We found that many of the younger generation had left for Israel: many others were busy, preparing for the Jewish Passover, when the houses must be perfectly clean, and leavened bread cast out. They seemed glad to

talk of the Messiah and His coming, though not understanding that He has come already; nor that at His second coming their nation will mourn as they look on Him whom they have pierced. But one dear soul among the women had remembered a chorus of former visits and sang it softly with us.

In the "Houmari" quarter (where the freed slave, dark-skinned people live) many of our friends would have welcomed us, but there was opposition from outside that saddened our last visit there. But prayer can reach them.

Others, now widows, of Arab extraction and living outside the secluded quarter welcomed us, and lastly there were our tent women. Fatma, first met many years ago, received us with open arms, and took us to the group of stone houses the government have had built for them to replace their goats' hair tents. We could have gone from home to home—they wanted us and remembered the messages, but time was all too short. Pray that we may be shown in God's time a house where we can stay, for hotels are too expensive, and quite unsuitable for our work.

We questioned about our former outpost there but it is complicated by a law suit between the Jewish proprietor and an influential Mozabite, and we know that wealthy man would not desire a missionary so near his property.

Thank God the last word does not rest with us. He has His time, and place, and plan. M. D. GRAUTOFF.

### MISSIONARY CONVENTION

The Algiers Mission Band will be participating in the Brighton, Hove and District United Missionary Week, to be held from July 4th to 8th, at Holland Road Baptist Church, Hove.

An illustrated talk on the work of the A.M.B. will be given at 5.15 p.m. on Tuesday, 5th July.

### DEPUTATION

During the Summer, Miss E. Clark and Miss A. E. Powell will be continuing their deputation ministry in the following areas:—

June 3-14 Galashiels, Selkirk and Hawick.

June 15-27 Edinburgh and Broxburn.

June 28-July 18 Glasgow.

July 19-Aug. 8 Dundee.

Aug. 9-12 Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Aug. 13-26 Scarborough.

Aug. 27-Sept. 12 Leeds and Bradford.

Sept. 13-19 London.

### DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN

The friends whose names are given below have kindly consented to serve the A.M.B. as representatives in the districts stated. They are willing to supply information and literature concerning the Mission, distribute (and, if desired, open) missionary boxes, and arrange openings for deputation and prayer meetings on behalf of the work.

#### *London*

Mr. H. F. Berry, 12 Briston Grove, Crouch End, London, N.8.

#### *Essex*

Mr. R. W. Withers, Valentine Lodge, 146 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, Essex.

#### *Bedfordshire*

Mrs. R. Green, Red Cow Farm, Bidwell, Dunstable, Beds.

#### *Yorkshire (Leeds and Bradford districts)*

Mr. W. S. Ramsden, 61 Randolph Street, Bramley, Leeds, 13, Yorks.

#### *Wales and Monmouthshire*

Mr. L. J. Darch, 53 Trosnant Cres., Penbryn, Hengoed, Glam.

#### *Scotland (Dundee district)*

Mr. A. Miller, 25 Perth Road, Dundee, Angus.

#### *Scotland (Glasgow district)*

Mrs. R. Wilson, Loudonbank, 5 Belleisle Avenue, Uddingston, Glasgow.

## THE M'ZAB IS DIFFERENT

"When I was first allowed to come to Ghardaia," observed a senior missionary soon after this year's party arrived in the town, "it was only to prepare meals for my seniors." I, the Junior of this team, was soon to wish—though others would no doubt have thought differently—that I too might have been allowed to follow this very wise tradition. If only there had been some good excuse for staying in the hotel, to avoid the supercilious sneer of the completely indifferent, or the benign tolerance of others, sure of themselves and complacent in their desert stronghold. "Nothing can touch us here," seemed to be their unchanging attitude. "Whatever may happen in the barbaric north, here in the M'zab it's different." Perhaps, after all, the principal Administrator was right, and we were "wasting our time."

It may have been the celebrations that were going on in the town (two sons of a rich man were being married). Perhaps it was simply my ignorance and imagination. Whatever it was, it seemed that, from the moment I set foot in the main street leading to the market square, the hostile eyes of every one were fixed on me. Piercing eyes, prying eyes, eyes that glistened with hatred, indifference, or fanatical resolve to have nothing to do with this "Roumi" and his books.

How many times I walked up and down praying for courage to "own my Lord," and declare publicly what was only too plainly obvious—"He is the Protestant Missionary with the Injil." At last my courage rose; and I boldly stepped into a large general store, and waited. I waited what seemed an eternity—surely some one would ask me what I wanted—surely it was impolite to keep a customer waiting. But I was not a customer, and they knew it. At length the books that I had been nervously fingering were thrust back into the satchel as the youngest member of

the staff stepped forward, with a coldly polite and nicely worded phrase—"Vous désirez, Monsieur?" Who? Me? Oh yes, I want . . . What did I want? What was I doing there, anyway? Frantically I looked for a way out. The door suddenly seemed jammed with people. All eyes, yes, again those eyes, seemed rivetted on the back of my neck. "Did Monsieur wish to see something?" Did I indeed—the sun, the sky, the street, anything to be out of this trap. Oh for a way out! A shop boy reached down from a high shelf a pair of sandals. Yes, that was it. Sandals. I suddenly knew I wanted . . . Yes, Monsieur would like to see a pair of sandals. None were suitable. Soon I was in the street again. Oh that I had stayed at home. Yes, the battle was joined. First round clearly to the enemy.

Up and down the street again. "This is silly," I told myself. "These folk are just the same as anyone else." "Just walk in as you would in Algiers or Blida and say, 'I am come to bring you good news. Good News of a Saviour. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.'" Yes, next time I would do better. I would not wait until approached, but carry the war straight into the enemies' camp.

This time, more prudent, an empty grocer's store seemed a likely opening, and I boldly, but with quaking knees and a racing heart, stepped into the ring. "*Salaam alaykum.*" No reply. "I have come with Good News. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Read the Word of God for yourselves." Not so much as the flicker of an eyelid to denote interest. Perhaps they don't understand my Arabic, better try French. Here goes. "*Bon jour, Messieurs.*" Not so much as a glimmer of interest. What next to say? "Are you interested in my books?" Whatever hopes I had as I framed this last question were soon shattered as one of the

staff, perhaps the proprietor, looked at me. Looked, seemingly, straight down the edge of his finely chiselled nose, and, with that haughty superciliousness that only the camel can equal, seemed to say, "Go." I went.

### HOW'S BUSINESS?

*(Another view of the situation)*

We had only been in Ghardaia a few days when we met some tourists in the main street. Hearing English spoken we stopped, and, after introductions, we were asked, "How's business?" To which question we replied, "Judging by visible results, rather poor."

Yet can we always judge by visible results? What of the many to whom the message was given personally, and whose interest was really awakened? What of Abraham—the enquiring Jew—Salah, and Mohammed—and the Caid's son—to mention only a few? Will you, as you read these lines, breathe a prayer for these and others like them, who this year came under the sound of the Gospel for the first time, and who must now face its claims either to accept or to reject?

Abraham—surely he had missed his vocation. He should have been Sales Manager in one of our large London stores! He listened intently, as the story of his namesake of long ago (a story which incidentally also figures in the Qur'an) gave an opportunity to tell of the faith that alone enables God to count us righteous with "faithful Abraham."

The enquiring "Nicodemus" Jew confessed that he tried to live up to the Law but couldn't. He was visibly moved as he was shewn from the Scriptures of his own Old Testament how that Christ "must needs suffer" to satisfy the Law's demands. Only fear prevented him from taking that great decision which could have liberated him from the bondage of the Law.

Salah and Mohammed invited me into their shop to show my books; they were a living testimony to the truth of the Scripture word: "there shall come

in the last days scoffers" for their declared intention was to scoff. Yet how soon they too were under deep conviction, as the Holy Ghost used the thought of the near return of our Lord Jesus, and the ensuing judgment, to break through their defences.

The Caid's son was secure in his own self-righteousness and his father's position of authority in the Holy City of Beni-Isguen. We talked of *The Sevenfold Secret*, a copy of which we were presenting to his father. Christ's insistence—"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" is utterly incompatible with the philosophy of this young Muslim; but he was not quite sure that he was completely right when we left.

In each of these lives, and these stories could be multiplied, the Holy Spirit now has a foothold. The seed of the Word has been sown. Only our persistent and prevailing prayer can release the power that can bring that seed to fruition. Join us in this crusade of prayer for M'zab, that next year's visit might be a time of harvest.

R. J. WAINE.

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### MISSIONARY BOXES

For the convenience of friends who like to give systematically to the work, we supply collecting boxes, which can be obtained from the office, or from District Representatives.

Unless other arrangements are made, boxes should be opened once a year (or more frequently if desired) and the contents forwarded to the office. Please note that coins and Treasury Notes should be sent by registered post to avoid loss, and that if cheques or Postal Orders are sent they should be made payable to "ALGIERS MISSION BAND" and crossed.

Any friends having A.M.B. boxes no longer in use are asked to return them so that they may be redistributed to others.



## PILLARS OF RELIGION

### “PRAYER”

*Prayer*—for which the Arabic word is “*Salat*”—is the second of the Five Pillars of Religion according to the traditions of Islam. It is said that Muhammed called it “the key of Paradise” and “that which caused a man to be a true believer.” He also said that God had decreed that five times a day prayer should be made by each true Muslim, and that this would ensure him the entry into Paradise. The difference, however, between what a Christian means by prayer, and what a Muslim understands by “*Salat*” is great enough for us to be told sometimes—“You Christians do not pray”; or, if we explain a little how we do pray, we may receive the disparaging remark “but *that* is not prayer.”

The passage in the Koran commanding prayer runs thus:—“O ye who believe, when ye rise up to prayer wash your faces, and your hands as far as the elbow, and wipe your heads, and your feet to the ankles.” This is the foundation on which tradition has built up the ritual and ceremony of Muslim prayer, adding strict rules as to position and gestures, attitudes and words—without which, according to orthodox believers, the prayer would be worthless. Besides the Koranic passage, other traditional sayings of their prophet help to make clear how important it is to every Muslim that he should, before praying, purify himself, that he may be cleansed from material, legal and ceremonial impurities. One of these sayings is “The key of prayer is purification.” But this is what the Bible calls “purifying of the flesh” (Heb. 9: 13) not the “purifying of their hearts by faith” (Acts 15: 9). The strictness required in this bodily cleansing and in the word-perfect repetition of the prayers makes one think sometimes of the saying (whose I do not know) “you very often say your prayers, but do you ever PRAY?”

It is an impressive sight to see a Mosque full of worshippers at prayer—or even to watch one Muslim out in the desert going through the same ceremony all alone, with the same appearance of deep attention. But I once saw, through the open door, a large congregation of Arab men, at prayer; and as they bowed to the ground, or or even prostrated themselves flat with knees, hands, toes, nose and forehead, touching the earth, a small boy of about 3 years, who had entered behind them, went through every movement and gesture with the same scrupulous correctness, and appearance of complete absorption. To him it could mean nothing, or at least nothing that he could understand: did it mean any more to them? A missionary of much experience, speaking of the impression made on casual observers by the sight of these Muslim prayers said:—“Personally, the writer questions whether the impression of tremendous spiritual reality thus given altogether corresponds with facts. Statutory prayer is taught to the small boy of 7 as a drill, and a drill it to some extent remains. These five daily prayers are, indeed, classified as a “work” or “duty,” and this classification affects the whole way in which they are instinctively regarded. Not thus does the element of feeling enter into Muslim prayer.” There may be more feeling in the private *Doua'* (supplication), which a Muslim may offer in his own words, but from personal observation one would be inclined to say that there was but little sense of drawing near to God, or assurance of a real response from His Love and Power to the cry of the heart, that what feeling there is leaves the spirit unsatisfied and lonely. There is far more of fervent feeling in the “*dhikrs*” which are practiced by the more mystical bodies of Islam. They may be called a sort of chanting service or prayer-meeting, where religious

emotion is stirred up by recitations, repetitions of the names of God, or in some cases by physical exercises or dances. At its best, the Muslim "believes that his spirit comes in contact with the unseen and into the Presence." Although this is very far removed from the spiritual communion known to the saints of the Christian Church in all ages, it shows a desire to draw near to God which may help to open their minds to the teaching of Christ. At its worst, the *dhikr* may be a danger. As another writer has said:—"No one can play with his emotional life without risk of acquiring the knack of auto-hypnosis; and, if of a weaker nature, practising it as a spiritual dram-drinking."

Briefly we have described the prayer life of a Muslim, as his religion teaches him; and we cannot do so without coming to the conclusion that there is something lacking in it which nothing but the religion of the Gospel can supply. Therefore we shall not be surprised to learn from the writers already quoted what they say of the features of Christianity which attract, or appeal to, Muslims. One is "the freedom, purposefulness, intimacy, and simplicity of Christian prayer . . . It is totally different in its whole scope and aim from the Muslim's "*Salat*"; ampler than his quite undeveloped "*doua*," saner and ampler than his *dhikr*." or again—"the idea of secret Christian prayer, if translated into life,

appeals to the devout Muhammedan, and so do the simplicity and naturalness of Christian public prayer, as well as the Christian family prayer, the last being altogether unknown to the Muhammedans."

It is, perhaps, one of the greatest kindnesses we can bestow on our Muslim friends to help them to understand how, in the Name of Jesus, we come in faith to a loving God, Who is ready to hear and to answer our prayer, and to respond, supplying all our needs, guiding us in all perplexities; and that, coming to Him thus, we can testify from our own experience that He never fails to give us the right and best answer. Some years ago, when working in a mission station which had been occupied by a dear friend (now with the Lord), more than once women who had known her came to ask me to pray for them, because they had found out something about the faithful prayer life of my friend, and believed that her prayers were answered and had been a means of blessing to many of the people she knew and loved. It is a solemn joy to be asked to pray thus. But we must ask ourselves, "Are we ready?" "We are asked to pray always and not only five times in the day . . . do we cultivate the habit of realising the presence of God sufficiently to enable us to live in that constant atmosphere of prayer which our religion and our profession demand?"

V. Wood.

## DEATH

At one time the odious thought of *death* was normally relegated to the culmination of old age. To-day, man's ingenuity coupled with man's depravity has speeded up the feeding of the insatiable jaws of death. Science can hurl millions into her fangs in a moment of time—but there science and human ingenuity must bid farewell. Some would fain take the sting out of death and see it as a deliverance; but

the Bible authoritatively declares death to be "the last *enemy*." Are we to leave this torturous scene of time, and fall into the hands of an enemy? It is a sad picture, but part of the Bible picture.

Ere we snuggle into our comforting hopes of eternal bliss, let us turn our eyes, if briefly, to a land where death plunges generation after generation into the dark abyss, never having re-

ceived the "Hope of the World," Who said—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Come into our Algerian streets and see a people who honour God with their lips, but whose heart is far from Him. Religious? Yes, to the letter. Their whole bearing breathes the pomp of their faith. Look at the haughty Taleb, revered by the faithful as he passes down the street, condescending to lower his head to receive their kisses upon his brow. Religious? Why, of course, and what stupidity that such infidels as Christian Missionaries should think to "convert" them. For what earthly reason should a Muslim descend from such lofty heights of self-assurance, to give heed to some heretical story of an insignificant Galilean? Why should he put aside his beloved Koran, written in exquisite Arabic to even regard a "foreigner's" Bible. How smug the Muslim is—and why not, since he belongs to the largest religious family in the world—300 million strong, with a conquering champion as their Prophet, who subdued everything before him by the sword.

All might be well for the Muslim *if only*—if only it was not appointed unto man once to die, but after that the judgment: if only, at the end of life, even a religious life, there did not await this awful enemy—DEATH.

You have seen the Muslim with his pomp and splendour: but listen—what do you hear? Shrieks—terrifying shrieks! What can they mean? DEATH. Death has overtaken a Muslim, and its arrival in that home is announced by the shrill shrieks of the women. Though chilled by the eeriness of that shrill hysteria, let us venture into the room where death has preceded us. It is dark; the still form is discernable by the light of two flickering candles. Someone enters, recites some inarticulate verse from the Koran,

then disappears. A daughter wails her grief; blood trickles from her face, torn by her own nails. The room slowly fills with women, who will pass the night-watches with the dead body.

What blood-curdling accounts are to be heard from the lips of those who have passed a night with a Muslim corpse! Who taught such illiterate women demonology? It never came from books; it came from such nights as these. The sights that these women would tell you they had witnessed, the visitations of Satan, the movements of the corpse, and all the supernatural mystery which enshrouds such a haunting experience, would not merely raise your hair, but bring a foretaste of the awful abyss into which death has hurled its impotent victim. "An horror of great darkness," to use Bible language, well describes the atmosphere in a room where the tyrant death has taken its prey.

The dawn that breaks upon a Muslim family in mourning is the dawn of deeper despair, for *hope* is not even on the horizon. The corpse is borne away on a wooden stretcher by six men. Walking behind the body are men—religious men, good men, bad men, interested men, or indifferent men—all with one thing in common, a *blank* concerning the fate of the one whom they are bearing to an ugly open grave. They give expression to the bitterness of the moment in a dismal reiterated chant, composed, it would seem, by Death itself, to add to the despair of the Dead March. The name of their prophet recurs throughout, but alas, he too has long been in the grip of death, his body has long since returned to dust. Still the mournful chant echoes on and on . . . Muhammed . . . Muhammed.

The body is lowered into its clammy grave, the face uncovered, the mourners retreat—one man remains. To the dead he repeats his name, and such details as may let him know how to answer Satan, whom he has well served, and with whom he will receive his aw-

ful wages. Snatched from the living by death, handed by death over to Satan, and by Satan over to . . . ? What an end ; what a finale to such a religion.

The prophet of Islam is the prophet of despair : the Christ of God is a Saviour of men. The Mighty "Allah" of Islam is powerless to save : the Christ of God is able to save to the uttermost. Faced with the last enemy—DEATH, Islam quivers and collapses : triumphing over this last enemy Christ rises, the mighty Conqueror. Death laughs at Islam, but is destroyed by Christ.

"The whole outlook changes—sin used to be the master of men, and in the end handed them over to death ; now grace is the ruling factor, with righteousness as its purpose, and its end the bringing of men to the eternal life of

God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 5 : 21).

"Death is swallowed up in victory. For where now, O Death, is your power to hurt us? Where now, O Grave, is the victory you hoped to win? It is sin which gives death its power and it is the law which gives sin its strength. All thanks to God then, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ; for He has delivered us from the fear of Death, the power of sin, and the condemnation of the Law." (I Cor. 15 : 54-57).

"For Christ has completely abolished death, and has now through the Gospel, opened to us men the shining possibilities of the life that is eternal. It is this Gospel that I am commissioned to proclaim." (2 Tim. 1 : 10, 11. J. B. Phillips' translation).

A. & J. PORTEOUS.

*Book this date now:*

**THURSDAY, 15th September, 1955**

**LONDON ANNUAL MEETINGS**

**3 and 7 p.m.**

**Bridewell Hall** (*Lecture Hall*)

**Eccleston Place**

**S.W.1**